Turbine House
Provo Brickyard, 1620 North 200 West Street
Provo
Utah County
Utah

HABS No. U-36

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HABS No. U-36

TURBINE HOUSE

Location: Provo Brickyard, 1620 North 200 West Street, Provo, Utah County, Utah
Latitude: 40° 15' 20" N Longitude: 111° 39' 39" W

Present Owner: Provo Brick & Tile Company

Present Occupant: Unoccupied

Present Use: Abandoned

Statement of Significance: This is a unique industrial structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

Sarah D. Dixon, 1885
Arthur Dixon, Lessee, 1903
Provo Pressed Brick Company, 1903
Sidney H. Belmont, 1919
Provo Brick & Tile Company

2. Date of erection: c. 1898

3. Builder: Unknown

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Building:

Right after the turn of the century, Mr. Arthur Dixon leased a plot of land to the north of Provo, Utah from Sarah DeGray Dixon for a brickyard. Dixon, with L. Holbrook, Thomas Boardman and S. H. Belmont organized the Provo Pressed Brick Company in 1903. The company subsequently failed in 1917 and was attached by the Provo Commercial and Savings Bank. The bank held the property and leased it until in 1920, the land and buildings were sold to Sidney H. Belmont and others.

He formed a new corporation, the Provo Brick and Tile Company, with a capital stock of $50,000, and became its manager. He was also the largest stockholder. The corporation met with reasonable success, especially during the post was building boom, but finally closed down in 1962.

The turbine house was used to power various areas of the brick plant. Initially it was used to power a saw mill to cut lumber from a cottonwood forest on the north end of the site. The lumber was used to build the original brickyard buildings. Later it was used to power a machine shop and clay grinders and pulverizers. A large rope "belt" extended from the turbine house to the various buildings to be powered. There a transfer pulley shifted the power to a belt wheel drive shaft which it turn operated the equipment.

The turbine house became limited in its operation when the level dropped in the water course. It was not possible to operate the machinery during the late summer, fall, and winter months, and by 1935 it was only used sporadically for grinding clay. It was abandoned soon after that as a part of the functioning plant. The turbine house is endangered by the route of a diagonal connection from University Avenue to the Interstate freeway to be built in the near future.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Mr. Steve Belmont, 145 South 1860 West, Provo, Utah, son of one of the founders of Provo Brick & Tile Company.

Sanborn Map, Provo City, 1917. Offices of Utah Fire Rating Bureau, Boston Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.

2. Bibliography:

Jensen, J. Marinus. History of Provo, Utah, 1924, Provo, Utah.

Prepared by John L. Giusti, AIA
September 5, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest: This industrial structure predates the Provo Pressed Brick Company which took it over in 1903.

2. Condition of fabric: Fair; heavy timbers are still sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This rectangular tower is 11' 6" x 20' 7" and 28' 10" high.

2. Foundations: Heavy timbers extend into stream bed.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: Unpainted vertical boards.

4. Structural system, framing: Eight heavy timbers are notched to hold the horizontal timbers. Tie rods of pipe hold the timber in position and the whole structure is guyed to the east bank to prevent its overturning.

5. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Gable - wood sheathed - no wood shingles remain.

C. Description of Interios:

The turbine machinery is no longer intact. The six inches in diameter pulley wheel and a few gears are still in position but the vertical shaft and vanes are lying on the stream bank fifty feet away.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. Orientation: Water approaches the Turbine House from the northeast. The mill race could be diverted at a point upstream but when the turbine was in operation the water entered a wooden flume which directed the water into the east side of the Turbine House. A gate in the side of the flume could release the water into a diversion sluice. At the north the water falls twelve feet and the mill race continues in a southerly direction from the Turbine House. Power was transmitted by a rope belt to the clay grinding wheels in the brickyard about 156 feet to the west. There was at least one intermediate tower to guide and support the belt. The banks of the mill race support a heavy growth of willows and weeds, cottonwoods and poison ivy.

2. Outbuildings: The nearest structure is a machine shop of brick on the west bank of the mill race.

Prepared by Paul Goeldner, AIA
Supervisory Architect
Utah Project 1967
July 20, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This record is part of a Utah Survey conducted in the summers of 1967 and 1968 under joint sponsorship of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation of the National Park Service and the Utah Heritage Foundation.

Field work, historic research and record drawings were done under the direction of Project Supervisor Paul Goeldner, AIA (Texas Tech University) assisted by Project Historian John L. Giusti, AIA (University of Utah). Photographs were made by P. Kent Fairbanks of Salt Lake City.

Student Assistant Architects on the 1967 team were Robert M. Swanson and Charles W. Barrow, (University of Texas) and Kenneth L. Lambert and Keith Sorenson, (University of Utah). 1968 Student Assistant Architects were Keith Sorenson, Charles D. Harker and Robert Schriever, (University of Utah) and Donald G. Prycer, (Texas A. & M. University).